

Silver Threads

Episode 16: Curiosity Older Than Doubt - with Hari Alluri

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Transcript

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

moment, space, folks, people, community, writing, poetry, mutual aid, curiosity, question, thinking, masculinity, called, hari, altar, poems, part, land, victoria, doubt

SPEAKERS

Eleanor, carla, Hari, Klee, Bonn, Anthony

carla 00:24

Hello and welcome to Silver Threads: still walking, still waking, and I'm carla.

Eleanor 00:30

I'm Eleanor. And this is the show where we trace our present path through people and stories of the past as we ourselves long term radicals learn about each other, from each other and continue to walk, continue to wake. This week we're joined by Hari Alluri, (he/him/siya) is the author of *The Flayed City* (Kaya, 2017) and *Carving Ashes* (CiCAC/Thompson Rivers, 2013). A winner of the 2020 Leonard A. Slade, Jr. Poetry Fellowship, his work is widely published in anthologies and journals, most recently in *Pandemic Solidarity: Mutual Aid during the Covid-19 Crisis* (Pluto Press, 2020), *Watch Your Head* (Coach House, 2020), *Apogee*, *The Capilano Review*, and *Solstice*. Hari's recent collaborations are through BIPOC Writing Community, Community Building Art Works, The Cultch, The Digital Sala, Massy Books, and Soft Cedar. Thanks for joining us, Hari.

Hari 01:22

Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here. Here is my living room with a little bit of sun coming through. I'm on Qayqayt First Nations land, part of Greater Vancouver, which is unceded Coast Salish territory, Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh peoples. Giving thanks.

carla 01:46

Thanks for being here, Hari. I was trying to remember when we met. I think it was at least a dozen years ago. It's always just such a pleasure to share a space with you even virtually. And I think I'm really excited about the first question, because while we've talked about organizing and a bit about our youth together, I never, I don't think I've ever heard your full story. So I'm excited to hear. Maybe you can share some of your watershed moments or just when you felt called to act and be part of a movement or part of an organization or organizing situation.

Hari 02:31

Yeah. I mean, I always locate one of my watershed moments as a moment of migration, which was to here in 1990. And I feel like, follow up watershed moments either move back to that moment, or through that moment to another, or to previous moments even before that, or the experiences of migration, racism, masculinity that kind of followed that experience. When I think about actually getting down into collective organizing, I feel like one of those moments was at Langara Community College, which is kind of like a special place for me. And it was both just community I'd already found, like the Third World Alliance was like, alive and strong at that point. And those folks that were in my kind of cipher who were like, organizing in that vein, and really, like a lot of folks of my generation at the time, the post-9/11 response by the colonial imperial powers congealed into more and more moments that were already there, you know? I remember some of the hip hop events that were organized at Langara College and some of the language of the MCs, Indigenous MCs, Black MCs from Seattle who'd come up for shows, and thinking about, you know, tuition protests. That was when tuition unfroze and there was like mass organizing among students against that, you know. And I think about, even about access to folks who are around me, or were around me, then who wouldn't have entered even Community College, if it wasn't for that tuition freeze in the first place. And so in that kind of moment, following 9/11, starting to think more. I had already been reading in that direction. And I'd already had, you know, years of experience being in a brown migrant body in this town. But that moment when folks were responding collectively, and in conversations, around like, daily conversations all the time — which was really rich for me in that space — kind of shaped me into actually trying to make things happen with collectives. Then there was, relatively soon after that, I got into and went to UVic. And the first week I arrived, first week I arrived, there's this clubs and course unions thing, people gathered outside the Student Union Building. And I was walking towards this spelunking club. I had already gotten this notebook, which, you know, going to UVic and finding community there leads me back to writing, 13 years after I give it up post-immigration. So I'd already taken some time to myself, wandered around, got myself a fancy-ass notebook like, 'Oh, I'm gonna use this fancy ass notebook and you know, write in it.' And then I was like, on my way to be like, I might be wanting to deal with my fear of underground things and small spaces, and I just want to explore underground. And then there was and then I saw those students of colour collective crew. And they were like, hi! come talk to us. And I was like, yeah, I'm gonna come talk to you. And, and they were, they ended up becoming like, my mentor peers, who I like, really got down with. And, yeah, also again, like, it comes back in many ways to my love for reading and writing, which I had kind of lost, but it had started to spark back into my life. You know, I had read Arundhati Roy, I had read, *Memory of Fire* by Galliano, and the way their work moved, and the way that it activated fire that was like, lying dormant and to ready to be activated. And then like seeing all these books by like, BIPOC

folks, folks of colour on this table, and having this amazing conversation with folks, and kind of like crushing on all of them. I mean, I use crushing in the sense that, like, I feel like children when they first meet other human beings, they either crush on them, or they don't crush on them, you know what I mean? And I crushed on all those folks there. And then starting to organize with them really shaped me, making the anti colonial feminist anti racist Zine, *PULSE*, with them. Really, that becomes the moment where I start writing again. And then, while involved in that crew and other crews, like through that time, and through that time there and like, still connected to community in Vancouver. I was part of a March 21st Coalition, and in that coalition, we ended up gathering with much community over here on the mainland, and that brought me into communication with like multiple crews here on the mainland. Specifically, I'm thinking about No One is Illegal and Ugnayan, the Filipino Canadian Youth Alliance. And the Filipino Women Center, K'layan Center, which become two of the main. kind of like, community, collective spaces and families, through which a lot of my growth activism and even writing became refracted.

Eleanor 09:37

I really liked that you said mentor peers, because that's such a cool way of putting it that makes it feel a lot more like a comrade space and a horizontal space as opposed to you know, the top down mentorship that gets programmed into us. And I also like that it seems like there was so much space there in that specific place, I guess UVic I'm not sure what that means. But...

Hari 10:06

The University of Victoria, on Coast Salish territory, but on the island here.

Eleanor 10:11

Oh cool. And one of the questions has to do with radicalism in place, which I think is an interesting question, not just for what you just shared, but also as an immigrant and how radicalism in place, what that means to you, where you are, where you're from, the places that you carry with you, but also where you exist.

Hari 10:35

Yeah. You reminded me of a little moment, a little moment that happened. So my name, like my family pronounces my name, kind of like Hari, which actually is kind of like the Nigerian pronunciation of it or the Yoruba pronunciation, Pidgin pronunciation of it. I was born in Ogbomosho near Alagbayun in Nigeria. And at some point, after 1995, so after I graduated from high school, I got really tired of folks struggling, or jokingly, mispronouncing my name. I remember this one person I met I think in 1995, and we interacted with each other for a year. And like, our whole interaction was them, like, jokingly not getting my name right, for a year, you know, and it was relatively hellish. And so like, from '95, through 2001, during which time I met some of the people who are still closest to me, you know, in and around that Langara College time, and as well as just like, still my community from South Vancouver, which is like a working-to-middle class, multi-racial, largely migrant immigrant neighborhood. I started introducing myself as Harry. And it was like, the day that I showed up in Victoria, and was looking at places, like looking for somewhere to live. And I just started introducing myself as

Hari. And in terms of that, I'm thinking, like, in a strange way, like, breaking out of spaces that constricted me already. You know, there's a lot of construction in high school in general. As much as I claim South Vancouver, to my heart, and always will, and like, write stories about, and poems about, and think through that time and space. A lot. And when I think about where I'm from, I often will say South Vancouver. And I mean that in the sense that because that space carries, like you said, carries lineages of spaces that aren't here. That ends up being the closest to the space I can name. Anyway, and one of, you know, the constrictions of masculinity in that space. Men, like, you know, I don't exactly want to become a poet in high school. And constrictions of imagination in that space. Where I didn't name myself until I broke out of that space. And again, I don't think it's a surprise that by having a little bit of space from the structures of and people of my limitations that I start to really get activated, in full. And I get to, like, claim that self. And I remember a friend of mine, Makita, who was like one of the writers, poets, who, like seeing her do Poetry Out Loud. When I was like, kicking it with her in Vancouver, in South and East Van, was when I was like, Oh, I want to... I'm gonna fucking write. You know? When I saw that, I was like, I can... like I imagined it was possible, you know. And she talked about how I reimagined myself into myself in Victoria, and on the island. And I think that's true. And I think that's happening again now, in another cycle, in this moment. We'll talk a little bit more about this moment later, but I think that's happening a little bit more now, again. And then, like you said, the spaces that I'm from, or that I have lineage from, like I really struggled with the word like 'from' and 'home.' Maybe two of the words you won't find in my poetry unless I'm struggling with them. But you know, my mama is Pangasinan and Lucanos. from the islands known as the Philippines, and my pops is Telugu from southern India. And they come from different different lineages of story and religion. They both have these interesting overlaps in their families, as well as interesting overlaps of migration, even within the spaces that they have lineage. And being born in Ogbomosho and raised in Ibadan. And having that space be like, the earth upon which I like grew. And then South Vancouver, like this land that... when I think about place and activism, one of the things I'm reminded of is that one of my first visits back to Vancouver, after moving to San Diego at the time — this is like, 2014, the visit — that I was having conversation with a friend and that conversation in relationship to the land and, you know, as a migrant, to this space, like I truly believed this place hated me. It was like, deep in my understanding of myself was that this place hates me. And I figured out it was like, when I in 2014, I was like, Oh, it's like the land itself, don't hate you, you know. The land doesn't really have that kind of doesn't have a lot of space for hate, in their being. Now there's people and structures, and even moments of the city that did have that specific hate for me, there's no question about it whatsoever. But it doesn't reach down below the ground. And I think that's huge when I think about space and activism. And I keep getting called back here. I keep getting called back here. I leave this area and I come back, even when I find spaces that are beautiful elsewhere and cities and people, you know. I always think about cities because, you know, that's the level at which you can be still almost in community. You know? And I think about, you know, the folks in places that I've connected with, up and down this coast especially, but beyond that. And I think about how there's something that keeps calling me back to this one. And I think I always will. I think I'll be in these journeys where my path takes me away from here and then brings me back, takes me away from here and brings me back. And there is something about this place, I think. I don't think it is unrelated to the ongoing strength of Indigenous communities

here. I don't think it is unrelated to, also, the youngness of migration, both like colonial settler and other forms of migration to the space. And I also think it has to do with just having found people on my journey that they keep bringin me back here.

carla 18:38

Yeah, I love that you, I mean not to be cliché, but it seems like you go away to find yourself. You know like even, I grew up in Victoria and to me Victoria is like, yuck, but I love hearing stories of people going there and obviously it wasn't Victoria itself, but it was a little bit of the land. The land so different there than here and I just loved that idea of the land being welcoming and I have a similar struggle with being here as a settler, but also I feel so connected to the ocean, the Pacific Ocean. And try to figure that out. So and I'm still trying to figure out how to do that well and be in good relations with the Squamish, Musqueam, and the Tsleil-Waututh peoples here, as well as migrants and other BIPOC folks and I'm curious for yourself, as you're on this journey, what are you still learning and what what feels... I don't know, what makes you feel a bit vulnerable?

Hari 19:43

First, I'll respond to all, but to that moment you talked about, that going away to find yourself. And I mean, I think that, so for that space, one of the things that helped me gain clarity about Victoria, like when I moved to Victoria I was like, it's fucking racist there. And I walked into, almost any space I walked into, and the place shut down. Like they would stop, you know. And I remember asking my, like BIPOC homies that I had just met. I was like, did I just imagine that? They're like, No. I was like, Oh, okay. You know, I grew up in a really, like, for lack of a better phrase. I grew up in "Browncoover". You know, and so like we had shit with each other. And, you know, I grew up in a relatively violence space. To the point where I remember, me and my homie. I mean, my dear friend, the first time we heard about, like, a brown boy who didn't grow up getting into fights and getting their face punched in, like, we didn't believe he was telling the truth. And anyway, I remember, we had this like, crying moment when we're like, oh, my God, like we didn't actually, like, it's possible. Like it's not completely and totally normal, the way that we grew up. Anyway, but I get into Victoria, and the racism is dead clear. I walk into spaces, there's a stop and look. You know, I mean, I'd already had like, racial profiling from the police for years before that. But there's these moments that you're like, Oh, shit, clarity. And that's like, when you talk about vulnerable, like, that's a moment when I couldn't hide either behind other explanations, or just, I shouldn't even say that. Because, I remember being in like, classes in UVic. And they're talking about, you know, community understanding of things. And I was like, Oh, my crew understood exactly what was fucked up in the world around them. You know, they had the analysis, we had the analysis. We know what happens when a bunch of us show up in a single space, and how that space shuts down, or how the cops get called, or how the panic ensues, etc. But in terms of that vulnerability, right now, I mean, I think that the spaces where our privilege comes from, end up being the spaces that we need to get most vulnerable inside. And so, my privilege comes from masculinity. And so that's why I need to be most vulnerable to what is lurking. I need to be most vulnerable to what I don't catch on first glance. You know, and also look at it as, again, not to be cliché, but, the sources of privilege will be the blocks to your own formal realization of yourself. You know, the ways that I, I mean, the voices in my head that

talk shit on me and have complete doubt in my selfness, and that's a masculinity voice. I can hear it, like the voice of constantly not being enough, the voice of being a piece of shit. Like to be like this, let's actually let me be vulnerable for a second. There's a day of like, not long ago, within the last week or two, you know, and I literally was like, I fucking hate myself. I am fucking useless. And you know, uselessness, you think about capitalism. You think about Empire. You think about Colony. And you think about masculinity, you know? And yeah, the venom still in that voice. I've done mad work with that. Mad work, in community with myself, from community practices to myself, in writing, against, with, through all this, you know, that one is the one... and when that one comes up, it has a danger of harming other people. You know, and it has a danger of preventing me from being my fullest self in any given situation. And not even to make it individualist like that. It prevents me from bringing my full of self to an organizing moment. You know, recently and I've got their names written down, so I saw I speak them Soon Chung Park, Suncha Kim, Yong Ae Yue, Delaina Ashley Yaun, Paul Andre Michels, Xiaojie Tan, Daoyou Feng, and Hyun Jung Grant. You know, in that moment, it would have been very easy for me to make it all about a very necessary analysis of Colonial extraction and Empire in Southeast Asia, specifically, and military encroachment of those spaces. And very easy even to talk about the gender dynamics of that. The folks I named are the folks who got shot in Atlanta recently in a racist, misogynistic, sexist, Colonial shooting, act of terror as I see it. And it would have been very easy for me to not implicate all the ways that, like, most of them Brown woman I know, most of the like, Filipinx woman I know, most of the Southeast Asian women I know, working class women who, like have like struggled in like migrant spaces of total precarity. You know? Most of them, their violence comes from men like me, you know, like their most direct violence or their most intimate violences. And their most daily harms, you know, comes from like, sons, brothers, fathers, partners, you know, like myself -- who are also from those spaces. So, yeah, when I think about vulnerability, I think about that, and I got a lot of work to do. I got a lot of work to do. So... yeah, I think that would be the moment that I'm thinking about. Also, just like, I'm regularly scared to put my voice out on, what, I guess most people talk on social media, right? I'm scared to put what I think on social media. In my regular self, I talk a lot of shit, I make a lot of jokes. And I don't do that, as much as I want to, in my poems, or in the parts of me that I projected in those spaces, and I need to work on that. Cuz I think that like, the communities that we're a part of that are where we're being in mutual aid with each other, and where we're like, trying to bring our fullest selves, the selves that are prevented from full existence by the systems that, you know, by the exact same ones we've named, you know. When we need to find ways to bring that full of self there, because that's the thing we're missing. So that's the thing we need to bring. You know, so I want to work on that. Thank you for asking that question. I think I was scared of that question. And I'm really glad you asked.

carla 28:21

Thank you for your vulnerability. I think Eleanor is going to ask the next question, but I really just wanted to say, as someone who gets to see your fuller parts of you, I'm excited about the thought of you sharing that more publicly and also to reflect back that I am raising a Transmasc son, and talking about masculinity through his lens is so healing for the the cis men in our life. And one of the things he says is he's like, I watched the cismen in our lives, to learn how to embrace a healthy masculinity. And he always mentions you, Hari, he always like, Hari is an

exemplary... And I know I just wanted, you know, it's sincere. It's honest. And I know that might be hard to hear and we are not in full intimate relationships with you. But I really wanted to say that out loud.

Hari 29:19

I thank you for that. And, you know, oh, yeah, those are huge things. I mean, and may they catch the most exemplary moments and not catch my bullshit, you know what I mean? And they and I think they, and he will and, you know, I think that's something for us, for cis men to witness in this moment. Just wanted to say Liam's name, if that's okay, and say thank you, Liam. But there is a moment right now. Now, where masculinity is being not just challenged, but being transformed by Transmasc folks. And, and I'm smiling because I'm thinking about, like some of the styling of some of my homies. And I'm thinking that like, this is going to be a really fucked up metaphor, but I'm saying it anyway, because I always come back to, like Bruce Lee talks about not just, nothing about the 'be water' moment, I'm talking about when he is talking about, you need to embrace the things that work for you. And you need to release the ones that really don't, you know, when he's talking about martial arts. But in terms of living and being in a body, becoming in a body, and to be longing in a body. Shout out Phaniel Antwi. You know, like, cismen have so much to learn from folks who are claiming a masculinity, but knowing so intricately the violences of that masculinity. And so when people who are making that as a choice to transform inside themselves. That is like, I'm welcomed to do that transformation inside of myself, and I hope that that comes through, I'm hopefully going to be around a little bit, long enough to like to make these things more true. That's one of my hopes, that I'll be around long enough to witness a version of masculinity in myself that wasn't possible 20 years ago, or wasn't possible, like, this morning when I woke up. That's a thing to look forward to. You know, and I think to be vulnerable with, you know. I'm down for that. May it be so. May it be so.

Eleanor 32:06

Kind of in line with that, you're saying that you hope Liam sees the sides of you that are wonderful, and not the side that you're still working on. But I think, you know, part of one of the things that this show does is highlight that, you know, we fuck up. People who have been doing this kind of work for a really long time. And like you said that you've done so much work on yourself and in community, and how important that part of it is and how that's not something that you like, just do a couple of times, and then you'd like check that box, you're like, great, I worked on myself, we're done.

Hari 32:47

No, no.

Eleanor 32:49

So with that, we asked folks if they can share some of those moments with us a couple of facepalm worthy moments or even moments where you were like, scared or reticent or things like that?

Hari 33:03

I mean, I hope that they like gather and metabolize the best moments. And I hope that they also see the, Yeah, may my failures be seen more clearly and gently by myself. And may I be able to transform those. And, facepalm moments, like in terms of that, I will say the moments when I've been worst in my close and intimate relationships are the moments that I need to transform the most. You know, like those happening in the growing up and then carry them into our intimacies and I don't want to like, that's where I don't want my shit to end up in other people's bodies anymore. You know, I don't want that. And so one of the things that is helping me with that is taking space to work and hang out with my own monsters. And know that, you know, our monsters come from places of protection. And there may be things we need to learn, so that they don't harm other people. In terms of facepalm moments, I'm thinking about, like, with that same crew, the folks of colour collective, UVic, we're making a banner for an anti-war gathering protest and event. And I'm joking with one of the woman on the crew that like, I'm like, yeah, anti-racist, anti-colonial, do we need feminist on that? I don't know if there's space for that on this banner, you know, and I was being jokey jokey and she was being jokey jokey, but she was also like really clear that it was fucking crucial. And that like, and not having that... like the foundational need for that shit to be there as part of like how we operate in our identity as a collective. And just like that clarity, like, that was a moment for me where, like, you know, it's not a story I like to tell very often, I'll put it that way. But a shout out to Somrita for like calling me down and calling me out and calling me in and making this like, and like having, you know, like making sure that I put brush to paint of that language. And he knows so much has to do with like, embodying. I go, I went back to Bruce Lee and I'm coming back to embodiment. And you know, like, so one thing I never thanked her for, like, officially she was, like, making sure that day that like that my hands had to paint those words, you know? And like may that brush stroke eventually be like, completed by me. But in the meantime, it begins in many ways with that brush stroke where my hands had to paint that. And like, thankfully that my hands painted that in that moment. So that's one. Another one is just like a general one. And one of my homies asked a question about art and activism at an event where I had made something and shared it. And my facepalm moment is that, what I didn't know, or see in that moment, was how much I didn't know. And like, I used to try to like, I used to think that I was writing what I knew or what I had learned or was transcribing in some way, you know? You know, in some ways, like some of my old poems might be sociology, poems, you know? Excuse me. What I'm saying is that, as a poet engaged in community and in like, poetry at all, what I've learned is that my work comes from questions and from curiosity. And like, what I'm looking for on the page as well, what was not there beforehand, you know. And there's a quote from James Baldwin that does get thrown around a lot, I am still going to recall it and maybe get it slightly wrong. I shouldn't get wrong, I've put it on enough like introductory pages to workshops. The job of the artist is to reveal the questions that the answers have obscured or obfuscated or blocked, you know. And I think that I was trying to have answers at one point in my poetry and moving towards the questions, and having that be the revelatory process through which I write is like, as poet, major facepalm moment and then it changes me in my approach to stuff you. know. I used to be jealous and maybe still am, like, you know, folks who are like, we've been clear since the beginning. You know, like they know you know, and to put in like movie terms or art, they know right from wrong, you know. And I don't know right from wrong. I think I'm better at witnessing folks' expressions of what is true for them or what has hurt them and then learning in some way from that and

hopefully learning in an embodied way like that brushstroke way. And so I think those would be two that come up for me, was that painting moment you know, give thanks to the folks in that room Roshmene, Somrita, Rubine and them. And then, yeah, that like, I used to write, revising, for an activist community in mind that were like, actual human beings I was going to be at the rally with, you know, and like I'm trying to revise toward curiosity, and something older than doubt. But a curiosity that's older than doubt. Yeah.

carla 39:53

I love that line, a curiosity older than doubt

Hari 39:57

Yeah, from a tattoo that happened last night. Or during Yeah, so Sacred Spirit Ink tattooed me on the equinox. And like I just had a session, like I said, those things that came up like in the last week or so they came up and I had to face them and connect with an amazing healer, community worker and spiritual worker named Jen Merumba. Shout out to Jen. And our session that we just had, and then like, this tattoo that has begun a while ago, this like, Sacred Spirit Ink tattoo that had begun, like months ago, and that has been incomplete and has like, I feel like it's incompleteness, like, a lot, a lot of stuff I need to release and like, and like, Face Face. Anyway, the last piece of information that came through during the tattoo was that love is older than doubt. And so curiosity is older than doubt. I think love and curiosity are intertwined. You know, I think creation comes from curiosity. So, yeah, curiosity older than doubt. For sure.

carla 41:07

Beautiful.

Eleanor 41:08

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[Comrade's show add with music under words]

Bonn 41:43

We occupied government buildings, we blockaded highways, and we talked about not as much but direct action to shut the shit down.

Klee 42:01

We invite you to join us for Indigenous action, a podcast where we dig deep into critical issues impacting our communities in the occupied lands known as the so called United States, or what many people recognize as Turtle Island.

Anthony /Bonn42:16

This is an autonomous anti colonial broadcast with unapologetic and claws out analysis towards total liberation. So take your seat by this fire, I made the bridges we burn together lighter way—to play game blazing fire that they can never stop.

Klee 42:42

Find us at Indigenoussaction.org. And with the channel zero network.

Eleanor 42:49

And now back to the show.

carla 42:51

I wanted to sort of pull on some of the poetry stuff but and connect it to this time and COVID and oh this is a two-parter. I always do the two-parter. I'm sorry,

Hari 43:03

It's ok

carla 43:04

One is, I would love if you read a poem that maybe you wrote this year in response this time. I know one of the poems you wrote early on in during lockdown, was like the salve for so many, me included. I read it daily. So if you'd be willing to read a poem for us, we would love that. And then the other thing is, I'm just curious if you can share what has shifted for you in your work as a poet as a writer, as a community member? Through this current crisis in the ongoing crisis of empire?

Hari 43:43

Yeah. So, you know, in the beginning, in the intro, I'm thinking about communities like Community Building Artworks, BIPOC Writing Community, and the Digital Sala specifically, that, two out of three of those didn't exist before pandemic, you know, Faith Adiele and Serena W. Lin got together had a conversation, offered a one time community gathering of BIPOC folks to write together on a Monday night. And that group has gathered every Monday since. You know, that space is community, community like holding each other, you know, it's like a mutual aid writing space in ways that didn't exist before that, you know. Yeah, so those folks I want to just shout out and think about what's deepened for me in this time of COVID. You know, I'm a bit wary of the, you know, the language of lockdown because of like the prison abolition response to that would be would be strong and I want to like honor that. honor that I'm not in that, you know, I'm not in that. And that language does do those maneuvers. And we need it to, and we, you know, like the metaphor comes and we need it. And then we also need to like, think about that metaphor as a poet and be like, maybe I want to give that. Give that one back to other folks, you know. And so one of the things that came up for me was that I need to write, and I went through, like a couple of cycles, and I've been thinking about this a lot. But like, after, like, a few resistance moments, after a moment of trying to be in production mode, and like, resisting people telling me I wasn't, I realized that underneath that underneath and underneath, and then underneath, is that is that I'm, I'm literally, like, I have to, I have to, there's a moment in a film, I

can't remember the moment and there's like, this, like, one writer is talking to like a young person who is a writer, and it's like, 'you're a writer when you can't help yourself.' And I was like, I want to write, but I'm not there. And this is like, you know, before I took the pen for serious, and now, I know, that I have to, and that when all else is said and done. And if there was no and I was watching this post apocalyptic TV show yesterday as well. Like if there was no like, quote, unquote, audience, per se, I'd still fucking write my poems. Like I'd write them for the, I'd write them for the ether. And I'd write them for myself and I would write them for like, the four people around me, and maybe I would write better poems for not, but for like, for the four people around me, if I really thought more about writing to them. But, um, but I knew that I had to. And then I, and I want to do it in and of itself. And that I have this like, I think I believe that the language work is like work anyway. Whether or not people read it. In terms of sharing a piece, I would love to and I'm also like, what am I going to show you, know what? Okay, I will in this space share something that, I'm going to share something super raw. So I'm working on a series of tarot cards. I'm working on a major arcana for a figure called Ekalavya who is a minor figure as he only has a couple pages in like an 88 book epic. In the Mahabharata, which is a major source of fucked up masculinity, as well as myth and story as well as like the caste system plays into that story. And really in like really intricate and like harmful ways empires at stake, you know, and is also like, the story that comes from is one of the stories of first like that, like is in my body before many other stories are and so I'm working on a major arcana for at Ekalavya, and I mean that in the sense that I'm like writing it to Ekalavya Major Arcana 10 the altar/the clay, which corresponds to traditionally the Wheel of Fortune or corresponds to the Lingling-o in the Kapwa Tarot by Jana Lynne Umipig' and this is via a tarot reading session with Cynthia Dewi Oka.

When the altar appears in a reading, it means you've been turned away by the teacher you sought. It means the structure that guru works in is anathema to your existence. It wants you and your people to disappear. The altar has appeared to you so you can build the teacher you need. Approach the river and submerged in river field the clay make the river an offering for permission to borrow to shape an altar. Be wary in your choosing the shape of an altar as a convincing thing. You will be convinced that your guru is this shape. It may not be quite so if you choose to shape the clay into the image of the guru who turns you away, you might not see the parts of yourself you've placed into the image. You might not see the jungle. you might not see your noni Who taught you how to listen to the clay, you might not see your Nanay whittling your first bow, you might not see Tatay who will hunt a deer and place in sleep into the bowstring. She weaves for you. You might not see the tiger or the jackal or the story of the clay, a story that reaches back into the ancient Earth, who has unconditional love for you is older than any guru. All these and more are in the altar that you shape. The statue of the Guru is an altar at Ekalavya church, mosque, temple bedside table, notebook. pen. The altar is a form of door, a door for your desire to reach through to the other side where the archery you seek seeks you. And here you are making offerings to the altar that you've shaped. And here you are putting in the hours of practice hours that shape your body into the shape of archery shall self. Look at the door again, notice how the image of the guru falls away to reveal the boy who shaped the clay, the door you built. You're looking back at it now. You've already walked through. Thank you.

carla 51:32

Thank you. I am just letting that just land.

Eleanor 51:39

Yeah, thank you so much for sharing that..... So I guess kind of, you know, jumping on the whole Tarot thing, and also the, you know, your work, looking into the future. And thinking about hope, and whether you have more or less hope for the future, and whether you feel things, I mean, things are always changing and becoming but what kind of shifts do you feel happening right now? And yeah, to share a little bit about that?

Hari 52:12

I think about how. I'm thinking about how, like, there's moments where we want to give like, I want to give honor to those moments when we are like, unable to identify with hope, but are still working through shit anyway. Like, for me, it was like, really, this is like a really small moment that happened to me at the beginning of pandemic. But it feels, I'll just share it anyway. It's a true story anyway, you know. I knock the eggs out of the fridge onto the floor. And it was like the last straw in a series of straws. And I'm like moaning in the kitchen, that I can't do this. I can't do this, I can't do this, I can't do this, I get to this, I get to this. And, as I'm doing that, my body is like running the water, grabbing the rags, wiping the eggs. And I'm still like, I can't do this, I can't do this, I can't do this, I can't do this. And I'm like wiping the eggs. And the eggs that have survived. I'm like, about to cook them because I've got to, you know, and like the exit didn't or like going into the compost. And so I just want to honor that some moments look a lot like that, you know, my mind was like, you know, my mind and my emotional body were like, without hope. They didn't, I didn't have it. And I like, you know, had a clean kitchen and an a meal for my family at the end of like, without hope. And so I want to give thanks to like, like, we have lineages of survivors who have like, done that. You know, I don't want us to live in that moment. I don't want us to live in that moment. But I want to honour that we have that moment. Like we have the capacity for that moment. And I want to honour the lineages through which that moment is like available at all. And then I'm witnessing people, like, being beautiful with each other. You know, conversations like this. Those same spaces I named before. I'm witnessing people be like, be closer to their fullest selves with each other and support each other and reach out to each other when other people when they can reach out to anybody else, you know, and like, I know that, you know, I know that there's no actual meal in like, Monday night or Friday morning. Or like other community gathering of folks writing together or sharing work together and raising things together. You know, there's no like food. But I know folks who like, will work around all sorts of shit to make sure they can be there on that Monday night to have that space and give thanks for it. I won't name names, obviously. But I've definitely seen people like hiding, like, under their desk at work, while being in workshop together. You know, literally, like, they're like, I'm hiding under my desk at work. You know, and I think that when I look at those spaces, and some of the communities that I couldn't have imagined before, this moment, you know, they obviously carry the, like, lineages of like, all the communities that have ever held us before. And they also hold like, they also hold something hopefully new, you know, I mean, I really dope moment was just like, one of the, there's this really amazing crew called Luya Poetry Out out of Chicago, queer Filipinx-led poetry space. And, you know, one of the core members reached out

to a bunch of folks, and asked us to contribute to a birthday Zine for the other one, you know, and like, I just got that in my email yesterday, like, and I saw the zine, and I was like, that stuff is beautiful, you know. Those are moments I think, in terms of the future, I'm just gonna say that like, I want to commit to doing more divination and more. Yeah, may us be more closer to our full loving may us be reaching into the, into the relations with each other that like that we carry each other in the most in the most beautiful ways and like learn from each other, and maybe work through the resistances that stop us from drawing towards that kind of community. You know what, I think that that's like, I think that's like, the connectivity of radical, of being of what's radical, is that windows, like, they don't happen, like in isolation, you know, I don't come to Tarot in isolation. Or come to cards in isolation, I don't come to story or language in isolation. I don't write poetry alone. I don't, I really don't. And when we, I'm just gonna say, may we maybe recognize those moments when they happen for us, because like, sometimes they happen, and we don't fucking see them. And we're like, I'm like in grieving mode and I forget the other thing that just happened at the same time. So I want to, I want to carry that. I think we will learn collectively to grieve more actively, in a way that allows us to surrender to the transformation that's available. And that will be part of how we welcome something more beautiful next.

carla 58:37

There's like a messy metaphor there that it's just wonderful that you know, like relationships are messy eggs on the floor, but saving enough to cook and sitting with the trouble. One of the questions that we've started to ask them this in 2021, is this idea about scaling over in our, you know, this has been a year that has laid bare how horrible White Supremacy is how horrific and brutal capitalism is, I mean, even people who never thought capitalism was a problem are saying capitalism is a problem. So we're at this place, mutual aid is on the rise, everything while these amazing things that activists and organizers have been talking about and working on for millennia, is you know, increasing, but yet there seems to be something gets in the way. And one of the things we're asking folks is like, Is there a fear or something that stops our collective power from increasing? or? Yeah, just what, why? Why does it keep stopping? And we've had some fabulous answers. And you know, it's been neat because no one's really given the same answer. So I'm curious to hear what Hari has to say.

Hari 59:51

I think we have these, like, I just I feel like we have these like moments of elasticity. And then constriction. And that's like in the rhythms of ourselves or bodies. I think that like, we have these moments of like, it's almost like a hangover. Like I just went through. So I wrote that Tarot set, I wrote a first draft of that Tarot set in a furious, like 21 day, 21 days, 21 cards, you know? And it was a moment of radical trust. And so, yes, so we have so much ingrained in us to like, give us doubt. That anything other than the like systems that we've like grown up, and been raised through and generationally raised through, like, we have so much in us that wants to ingrain, that doubt, that sometimes even a moment of radical trust will like, pull us back into that like clenched up space right afterwards, you know. And so I think one thing that will help is like, more of these moments of like, really radical trust that we are then able to sit with afterwards and go, like that happened. Here's how that happened. And then here's like, the next layer of vulnerability that like I can, I can work with underneath that, underneath that moment of radical

trust. Because sometimes we just need to like, like, you know, I don't know if it didn't feel like that. But like, there's a radical trust in the moment that if my hands keep working, I can have complete doubt, in my mind, and my hands will just keep working, we'll keep working. And then there's a moment where we come to a moment of creation. And like, we choose the thing that scares us most, to do next. And then after a flurry, fury, there's a moment when I, for example, like, returned back to the patterns of doubt that I've known for my whole, like, lifetime this lifetime. And so, and that's they want like the, like those moments of doubt, like really want back in, they really do. I am so identify. Okay, this is what came up. In the last few days, we talked a little bit earlier about, like, you know, love is older than doubt, or curiosity is older than doubt. We live in bodies that don't know that. We live in bodies that, that have like, like that first moment of violence, first moment of trauma feels like the oldest thing. And we live in cultural structures that, you know, that make us feel like, like, there is no us before, before the thing that we need to transform most. You know, and we live in cultural structures that also say there is no us without that. And so when we talk about, like the fear of our own power, we're also talking about, like..., When I was carpeting, I was once asked to dismantle the scaffolding upon which I was standing. And I had to, like, build it downwards, you know, from the top. And I couldn't figure out how to do it. But I think that, that, like, the, the bait and switch is that like, is that this is not the scaffolding. the thing that we're on the structure that we've that we need to transform is not the scaffolding for what we need to shift. So yeah, I, when I go back to that moment, and try to remember that I am like, there's a part of me that's older than doubt. That's a metaphor for what, what holds us back... is that we think and, and, you know, you know, as we've said to me, you know, like, consumption actually, like comes from like, it comes from doubt comes from like we cannot without, you know, like, it doesn't come from from like, joyful moving towards comes from like, I don't want this feeling I need that. I need that to fill the space of this thing, you know. And so I think that the metaphor does come full circle. And that and that we like the moment of radical trust, we need to find the thing beneath it, which is that there is something like that's actually older than doubt. And that, and that, and you no doubt is like, it's might be a limited word, but, but like, you know, I'm thinking about that nagging feeling that like, oh, but can we really imagine something after this? You know, that nagging feeling of like, of like, or the moment that might, like, make me want to resort to, like, the exact same patterns of like, schooling and parenting, that like came to me, because I know them. And I know them, you know? And, I mean, living in a space of not knowing was scary as fuck. But I, but I want that. I want to know. I mean, it's so it's funny how it comes full circle, because I like before today, I had never said the phrase, curiosity is older than doubt. And now like, I'm coming back to that and being like, Oh, that's the actual thing, isn't it? That's the thing I need to work with here. We're afraid of. We're afraid there's nothing older than our own limitations. And then maybe we can remember that curiosity that like, procedures that moment. I think I have to leave it there. In terms of that response. I think it's all I've got right now.

Eleanor 1:06:45

Well, maybe this is a little like, it's a little bit less of a philosophical question, I guess. And it's more of like a sort of folding of time and sense that we like to ask folks about some people who inspired them when they were first starting out, but then also like, who are some folks that are just starting out now that inspire you? So kind of both bookends I guess of that question.

Hari 1:07:10

Yeah. I mentioned Luya poetry there at luyapoetry.com. I mentioned the *Digital Sala* and Bipoc writing community. So Luya poetry existed before pandemic but has been such a crucial part of my experience of organizing in the last year. And *Digital Sala*, @thedigitalsala which is our linktree. And then BIPOCwritingcommunity.wordpress.com. Those are three like new spaces. Those are two new spaces in one young space that have been super crucial for me. So I want to name lately *Marías at Sampaguitas*, who are on Instagram and online and in print, are Filipinx-led and femme-led, nonbinary-led journal, like a Lit journal, and they're doing dope, dope, dope, dope things. *Apogee* has been around but it's doing this like, work right now. That is like, opening up by heart. They are moving from the space of their own hearts without any compunction, they're like, responding from like, like responding from here. I mean, original inspirations, I gotta like, shout out a crew of like mentor- peers. You know, I got a shout out to Cinderblock, unofficially, you won't find them on any websites. But that's like, that's a crew of folks with me who shaped me, you know, and VONA shaped me as well vona/ voices. I mean, there's so many and if I start to list off the orgs that like without who I don't exist as a writer, and the and the communities, you know, Coloring Book project, Toronto Asian Arts Freedom School, Vona, Voices, Thistle, ou know, those spaces RAIN Zine, all these spaces that like the Tri weekly foundation family back to the source like reading slash events slash music slash all night long series. These used to happen on Tuesday nights. At Nyala on Main Street, an Etheopian restaurant, where... so this is like this is a beautiful story. You know, a lot of times when a deep community space shuts down. It's like a moment of deep grief and it was a deep grief. Right? But this is one of those few moments, where what happened was, Sapha was like, he's like, 'I'm gonna go learn how to keep bees.' I can't be out here in this restaurant anymore. I'm getting bored. You guys are dope, we appreciate all of you coming through and this dude like, you know, Grandpa, like, out there till three in the morning, every other Tuesday night with us and was wide awake when I was like ready to pass out, you know? And, you know, if we're thinking about people who's, like, who operate from curiosity, like, that's a person, let me not even list all the writers who've influenced me, let me let me say Sapha. You know, that's, that's this is a person who operates from curiosity. He wants to learn how to keep bees next, he believes in that shit, and knows that it connects to community. Right? And he's been doing this community, he wanted that event to happen in his restaurant because he believes in community. And then he wanted to do that next thing because he believes in curiosity, and, community, you know, and in a time of, like, rapid gentrification, when, like, our favorite spaces are being shut down, not just by the ongoing economics of late capitalism and colonialism with also the specific specifics of, of COVID, you know, I want to call the moment. you know, I don't want to give thanks to Massey books, where I'm at. My day job is at a bookstore that is bringing a thriving-ness to folks where people have rediscovered readings. You know, we're like, learning it for again, for the first time. One thing that gives me hope, to be honest, the plethora of like, QTIBIPOC, two spirit, Indigenous, Black, folks of colour, migrant femme, women, non binary, Trans, like books that like babies are reading, now. You know, I came up with Dick and Jane. And I learned that A is for Apple. And that's like, my original language wound. You know, when I talk about that a lot of my work actually, like the original language wound through which, like, all my other languages get, like, you know, like, face a knife. And kids are coming to language through, like, you know, like,

activists are making kids books being like, let's show possibility now. And, you know, you're talking about, like, folks reading about capitalism and anti capitalism as adults, like, maybe the ones who are like, growing up having that I like that notion possible. before they even have language. That's a real positive shift. I don't want to like make, I don't want to, I don't want to have a future nostalgia quite yet. But I really do want to meet the kids who like, come up off this stuff. You know, and like some of the young poets right now. There's a fierceness in his shamelessness that like, you know, I was literally trying to invent for myself, inside my own body that like folks come to the page already having now and I'm like, I'm ready for I'm ready to learn from them.

carla 1:13:20

That's an incredible list and shows how connected you are and all the threads you weave and community. We just have, I think, just two more. One is, we've started to build in a mutual aid component to the show. And if you have an organization or a collective or somebody you would like to raise solidarity funds for?

Hari 1:13:46

I mean, there is a series of GoFundMe directly for the families of victims of the Atlantic shooting, and justice for Asian American Pacific Islander folks in Atlanta, and they're doing some pretty dope, organizing there as well. The like, SEARAFund.ca is like a fund for BIPOC creators artists right now. And they have a long way to go with their fundraising. You know, I'm majorly thankfully, the donations to the memorial funds have been really strong. The last little while, always ongoing Black Lives Matter always ongoing. You know. And this SEARA FUND on right here, there's a lot of folks who don't have access to forms of funding and or to their own like to basic work, you know, or living wage, no matter what the workings, you know, for folks to connect to. Yeah, it's, I think it's dope that there's concrete mutual aid involved. in this, you know, and I think those are like, I just want to say like, we can create from our curiosity and they're like, come to listen in our curiosity and also offer, like, direct active things that people can do. You know, I think we always need to come back to what people can do. And, and these are a couple things.

carla 1:15:23

Thanks. Well, you mentioned a few books, but is there a song or a book that acted like a spark? Or is there a book or a song or musician or that you would like to recommend for our listeners to spend some time with?

Hari 1:15:46

I mean, want people to be listening to Kimmortal right now. Kimmortal doing is making the music that is closest to like, stuff right now. My homegirl Cynthia just sent me the Sharecroppers Daughter, an album. That is phenomenal. But I also think people should check out. If I'm thinking about my origins stuff, like you know, borrowing Curtis Mayfield, from the library, when I was like a teenager is like, so crucial to me. And yeah, Curtis Mayfield, Nina Simone, Gil Scott Heron, as you know. There was a period of hip hop from the late 90s through the early to middle lows, that was like my most active listening, you know, and so like, I always go back to that. And

that's when I learned about blue scholars and native guns, Kiwi and bamboo. And like that specific Filipinx connection, you know, there are some songs from that moment that will always bring me like myself. One that comes up right now is like this difficult song from Bamboos for his second album, called The Love, is one that comes up for me right now. And there's a song called Champion by the Native Guns that comes up from me right now. It's like, it's like a song that I like, played for myself, to give myself thanks for my own labor. My own like, when I'm, yeah, yeah. When I'm like sending stuff out sometimes, you know, like, that's where like, doubt comes in. When you move into transaction. You know, I think we should think, yeah, doubt comes in when you move into transaction. And so in that moment, where I might be sending work out for someone else to consider, doubt is like, active for me. And so, to go back to like, the place where curiosity or love was before doubt, is like to give thanks to the Labour part. And so like I play that champions to be like, the champion part is in the labour. There's in the work, and all the rest of it, like, I have no control over that. So you know, the transaction is after it was after the labor. I'll put the labour and give thanks to that.

Eleanor 1:18:46

Silver Threads is recorded in different places across borders. carla is located in Canada on Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh lands. Eleanor is located here and there usually either in Sweden or on piscataway land now known as Washington DC, and our guests join us from around the world. You can find out more about the show and our guests at Groundedfutures.com. To learn more about Eleanor's work, visit artkillingapathy.com and follow her on Twitter and Instagram @radicaleleanor. For carla. Follow her on Twitter and Instagram @joyfulcarla. You can also reach out to us at SilverThreadsshow@protonmail.com. And lastly, if you want to support the making of the show you can donate over at Groundedfutures.com. Thank you to the Grounded Futures team for supporting us with promotion. All of this snazzy graphics that you see are created by Jamie-Leigh Gonzales. Grounded Futures is a multimedia platform and is produced by carla bergman, Jamie-Leigh Gonzales and Melissa Roach. Post production audio for our show was done by Eleanor Goldfield the intro and outro music for our show is a song called Floodlight by Eleanor's former band Rooftop Revolutionaries. Thanks for listening and now let's go rattle thrones and topple Empire.